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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PARM PREL HR LY

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR DISCUSSES LIBYA, ARTICLE 98, REGIONAL RELATIONS, ICTY AND IRAQ

REF: BELGRADE 2018

Classified By: DCM Patrick Moon for Reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

Summary

¶11. (C) The DCM met September 3 with President Mesic's new Foreign Policy Advisor, Ambassador Ivica Mastruko. Mastruko said there had been no discussion of military-related projects during President Mesic's recent trip to Libya. President Mesic has washed his hands of any personal efforts to facilitate the surrender of Croatian ICTY indictee Gotovina to The Hague. Although Mesic's upcoming first official visit to Belgrade would be heavy on protocol events, Mesic would likely meet with Croatian-Serb refugees and urge them to return home. Mastruko said work was underway on an Article 98 proposal that Picula would present in the U.S. this month. Finally, Mesic would neither promote nor criticize the GOC's proposal to send a military contingent to Iraq. End summary.

¶12. (C) In our first ever meeting on September 2 with Ambassador Mastruko (see paras 10-11 for bio information) since he took over as President Mesic's foreign policy advisor late last month, Mastruko emphasized the importance of the Croatian relationship with the U.S. and his strong desire to consult closely, frequently and candidly with the U.S. Embassy. The DCM explained that newly arrived Ambassador Frank had established informal relationships with senior GOC officials to promote good communication and a better understanding of each country's points of view.

Libya

¶13. (C) Mastruko understood U.S. sensitivities regarding Croatia's warming relations with Libya and explained that President Mesic's only objective was to gain commercial projects for Croatian firms. He made clear that there were no representatives of military-related firms on Mesic's trip to Libya last month and there were no discussions of any military projects with the Libyans (nothing on military ships, nothing on aircraft (contradicting reftel allegations from Yugoimport)). He did say that the Libyans expressed interest in using Croatian shipyards to overhaul old commercial vessels.

¶14. (C) Mastruko said that Mesic had even acted on behalf of other countries in the region in promoting specific commercial projects such as the sale of Macedonian steel and Bosnian road building capabilities.

¶15. (C) However, Mastruko ended this discussion by noting that although Croatia would never do so, he was aware that Serbia and Montenegro may be considering a Libyan proposal to train pilots.

Trip to Belgrade

¶16. (C) Mastruko said that Mesic's upcoming first official trip to Belgrade would be heavy on protocol and light on substance. However, Mesic was seriously considering a meeting with Croatian Serb refugees to urge them to return home.

Troops to Iraq

¶17. (C) When the DCM expressed appreciation for the GOC's decision to send a small military contingent to Iraq, Mastruko carefully observed that Mesic had agreed with PM Racan not to comment publicly on this proposal before the Sabor endorses it, which the GOC expects by the end of September. Mastruko noted that there had been some criticism of this deployment in the press and the public did not seem strongly supportive. (Comment: We believe that President Mesic has reservations about deploying Croatian troops without a specific endorsement by the UNSC. End comment.)

Article 98

18. (C) Mastruko confirmed that the MFA was working on two possible alternative approaches to an Article 98 agreement. One would be an extradition treaty and the other an MLAT-type agreement. He said FM Picula would take the proposal to the U.S. this month for discussion with senior U.S. officials. (Comment: It was not clear whether Mastruko was suggesting the proposal would include both agreements or whether the MFA was studying whether to propose one or the other. End Comment.)

ICTY

19. (C) In light of UNSCR 1503 and Gotovina's failure to act, Mastruko said that President Mesic had dropped all his efforts to facilitate Gotovina's surrender and transfer to the ICTY. He was now encouraging the Ministry of Interior and other GOC organizations to do everything possible to capture Gotovina who was now &on his own.⁸

Biographic Information

10. (C) Ambassador Mastruko was born on an island near Zadar in 1940. His work experience is as follows:

1963-1966	Journalist for Narodni List weekly
1966-1972	Professional politician in district committee of Communist Party
1972-1974	Manager and editor-in-chief of Zadar Radio and Television Center
1974-1978	President of Executive Council of the Zadar Municipal Assembly
1978-1982	President of Zadar Municipal Assembly
1979-1989	Professor at Zadar Faculty of Philosophy
1989-1991	SFRY Ambassador to Vatican
1992-1993	Croatian Ambassador to Italy
1993-1996	Croatian Ambassador to Greece and Armenia
1996-2000	Croatian Ambassador to Slovenia
2000-2001	Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs
2002-2003	Advisor to President Mesic on Domestic Affairs (Relations with Religious Communities)
2003-	Advisor to President Mesic for Foreign Policy

11. (C) Mastruko speaks excellent English, is fluent in Italian and is &proficient8 in German and Slovenian. Mastruko clearly enjoyed his diplomatic postings. He is married and has two grown sons who work in Zagreb.

FRANK

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